

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DACCA 05677 01 OF 02 041141Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NSCE-00 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 INRE-00 EB-08 MCT-01 ACDA-07 IO-13
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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6548
INFO DIA WASHDC
CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 5677

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINS, MILI BG
SUBJECT: BANGLADESH MUTINY

1. I HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM AN HOUR-LONG MEETING WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN IN WHICH HE BRIEFED ME ON THE AIRCRAFT HIJACKING AND THE MILITARY MUTINY. BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTH OF THESE EVENTS, I AM REPORTING TABARAK'S COMMENTS IN SOME DETAIL IN THIS AND TWO SEPARATE TELEGRAMS. TABARAK'S VIEWS ON THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE HIJACKERS AND THE MILITARY SEIZURE OF THE AIRPORT TOWER EARLY SUNDAY MORNING ARE BASED ON FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE AND ARE, I BELIEVE, RELIABLE. TABARAK MAY, HOWEVER, BE SLIGHTLY CONFUSED ABOUT THE TIMING OF CERTAIN EVENTS BECAUSE OF THE PACE AT WHICH THINGS MOVED. HIS VIEWS REGARDING BROADER ASPECTS OF THE MILITARY MUTINY ARE BASED ON SECONDHAND KNOWLEDGE, BUT ARE GENERALLY CONSISTENT WITH OTHER DATA AVAILABLE.

2. TABARAK SAID SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE BDG HAD BEEN
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SECRET

PAGE 02 DACCA 05677 01 OF 02 041141Z

AWARE FOR SOME WEEKS THAT DISSATISFACTION WAS GROWING AMONG THE ENLISTED RANKS OF THE MILITARY, PARTICULARLY THE ARMY. THINGS CAME TO A HEAD FIRST IN BOGRA ON THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 30, WHEN A GROUP OF ENLISTED MEN KILLED SOME OF THEIR OFFICERS AND SEIZED PART OF THE MILITARY CANTONMENT AREA. THERE WAS ALSO SOMESHOOTING IN THE TOWN OF BOGRA. THIS SITUATION HAS BEEN BROUGHT

UNDER CONTROL. DISRUPTIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE MILITARY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF PREOCCUPATION OF THE GOVERNMENT WITH THE HIJACKED JAL AIRCRAFT TO MOVE AGAINST THE OFFICER CORPS IN DACCA DURING THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2.

3. TABARAK SAID THE MUTINY OF ENLISTED RANKS IN DACCA WAS LIMITED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO THE ARMY SIGNAL CORPS AND THE AIR FORCE. HE ATTRIBUTED THIS PRIMARILY TO THE FACT THAT THESE TWO ELEMENTS ARE BETTER EDUCATED, MORE LITERATE AND THUS MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO OUTSIDE PROPAGANDA THAN MEMBERS OF THE INFANTRY OR OTHER MILITARY SERVICES. HE BELIEVES THERE WERE TWO MAJOR REASONS FOR THE REVOLT. FIRST, THERE WAS LINGERING RESENTMENT AGAINST THE EXECUTION OF COLONEL ABU TAHER IN JULY, 1976, AND THE FACT THAT SEVERAL OF TAHER'S COLLEAGUES ARE STILL IN JAIL. SECONDLY, THERE WAS RESENTMENT AGAINST THE FACT THAT THE OFFICERS RECEIVED FAR MORE PAY THAN THE ENLISTED RANKS. ONE PROPAGANDA LEAFLET WHICH WAS DISCOVERED MENTIONED THAT OFFICERS EARN TEN TIMES MORE THAN ENLISTED MEN.

4. TABARAK BELIEVES THE JSD CAPITALIZED ON THIS GENERAL DISSATISFACTION AMONG ENLISTED RANKS AND USED ITS SUPPORTERS WITHIN THE MILITARY TO TOUCH OFF THESE REVOLTS. ASKED IF THE ARMY SIGNAL CORPS AND THE AIR FORCE COOPERATED IN THE DACCA REVOLT, TABARAK SAID BOTH ELEMENTS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DACCA 05677 01 OF 02 041141Z

WERE SEEN TOGETHER IN MILITARY VEHICLES, AND THE GOVERNMENT THUS BELIEVES THIS WAS A COORDINATE MOVE.

5. REGARDING THE DRAMATIC EVENTS IN AND NEAR THE DACCA AIRPORT TERMINAL BUILDING, WHERE A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WERE KILLED, TABARAK SAID THAT AIR VICE MARSHAL MAHMOOD, WHO WAS CONDUCTING THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE HIJACKERS BY RADIO, CAME DOWN FROM THE CONTROL TOWER ABOUT 2:00 A.M. SUNDAY MORNING TO TALK WITH ONE OF THE RED ARMY PRISONERS BROUGHT IN FROM TOKYO THE PREVIOUS DAY. MAHMOOD, TABARAK (WHO WAS PRESENT IN THE TERMINAL BUILDING THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD), AND VICE PRESIDENT SATTAR MADE A MAJOR EFFORT TO GET THIS PRISONER TO INFLUENCE THE HIJACKERS TO RELEASE MORE PRISONERS (SEE SEPTTEL). FOLLOWING THIS DISCUSSION, MAHMOOD RETURNED TO THE TOWER BRIEFLY BUT THEN CAME BACK TO THE ROOM IN WHICH HE AND THE VICE PRESIDENT WERE SITTING, LAY DOWN ON THE FLOOR AND WENT TO SLEEP. TABARAK AND THE VICE PRESIDENT SAT UP DISCUSSING THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE HIJACKERS.

6. THE FIRST INDICATION OF TROUBLE CAME SOMETIME LATER

(TABARAK IS NOT SURE OF THE EXACT TIME), WHEN SHOOTING WAS HEARD NEAR THE MAIN HANGER AT THE AIRPORT. IT SUBSEQUENTLY DEVELOPED THAT A NUMBER OF JUNIOR OFFICERS WHO HAD BEEN CAPTURED AT VARIOUS PLACES IN THE AIRPORT GROUNDS BY AIR FORCE ENLISTED MUTINEERS HAD BEEN EXECUTED NEAR THE HANGER. ON HEARING THESE SHOTS, THE AIR FORCE OFFICERS STILL IN THE CONTROL TOWER LEFT THAT AREA, AND SOME CHANGED QUICKLY INTO CIVILIAN CLOTHES. VICE PRESIDENT SATTAR WENT LOOKING FOR HIS AIDE AND FINALLY ENDED UP IN A SEPARATE ROOM. MAHMOOD AND TABARAK HUSAIN WENT INTO AN INNER ROOM NEAR THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION, BEHIND TWO LOCKED DOORS, AND CROUCHED BEHIND A STEEL FILING CABINET.

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SECRET

PAGE 01 DACCA 05677 02 OF 02 041204Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 DACCA 5677

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

7. WITHIN A SHORT TIME, A GROUP OF FOUR OR FIVE ENLITED MEN BEAT DOWN THE DOOR AND ENTERED. THEY TOOK MAHMOOD AWAY. TABARAK EITHER IS NOT CERTAIN HIMSELF OR WILL NOT REVEAL WHETHER THESE WERE FRIENDLY FORCES OR WHETHER MAHMOOD SUBSEQUENTLY ESCAPED FROM THEM. IN ANY EVENT, MAHMOOD CAME THROUGH THE INCIDENT WITHOUT INJURY. TWO MORE ARMED GROUPS ROAMED THROUGHT THE OFFICE SUITE LOOKING FOR AIR FORCE OFFICERS TO BE LIQUIDATED. WHEN TABARAK IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS A CIVILIAN AND A FOREIGN MINISTRY EMPLOYEE, THEY DID NOT BOTHER HIM. ONE SAID, "SIR, THIS IS A FIGHT BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR. DO NOT SAY YOU ARE EITHER A CIVILIAN OR MILITARY OFFICER."

8. AT ABOUT 8:00 A.M. TROOPS FROM THE NINTH DIVISION ARRIVED. TABARAK SAW A NUMBER OF CAPTAINS AND MAJORS AS WELL AS AS SOME ENLISTED MEN. THEY OVERPOWERED THE AIR FORCE ENLISTED TROOPS WHICH STILL OCCUPIED THE BUILDING AND GROUNDS AND CLEARED IT FAIRLY QIICKLY. TABARAK BELIEVES MANY WERE KILLED, AND HE SAW THIRTY OR FORTY OF THE REBEL TROOPS WHO HAD BEEN CAPTURED AND WERE CONFINED IN THE SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 DACCA 05677 02 OF 02 041204Z

AIRPORT VIP LOUNGE. TABARAK PERSONALLY SAW THE BODIES OF THE BASE COMMANDER, GROUP CAPTAIN ANSAR, AND MAHMOOD'S ADC. ANOTHER OFFICER (UNIDENTIFIED) WHO WAS FOUND BY TABARAK IN THE STAIRWAY WAS NOT DEAD AND TABARAK CALLED AN AMBULANCE TO TAKE HIM TO THE HOSPITAL (THIS MAY HAVE BEEN WING COMMANDER CHOUDHURY). AIR INTELLIGENCE CHIEF MASUD (MAHMOOD'S BORTHER-IN-LAW), WHO WAS ALSO IN THE BUILDING, SAID HIS MORINIG PRAYERS AT ABOUT 4:30 A.M, PUT ON THIS UNIFORM, WENT OUT TO SEE WHAT WAS GOING ON AND WAS KILLED. AIRMEN CONTINUED TO ROAM THROUGH THE TOWER LOOKING BY NAME FOR WING COMMANDER ANWAR SHEIKH. WHEN FOUND, HE WAS LED AWAY AND SUBSEQUENTLY KILLED. TABARAK SAID THE ENLISTED TROOPS WERE LOOKING IN GENERAL FOR ANY OFFICER, BUT THAT THEY HAD SPECIFIC HIGH RANKING OFFICERS AS SPECIAL TARGETS.

9 REGARDING THE SITATION ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY, TABARAK CONFIRMED THAT THE BASE ARSENAL IN THE CANTONEMENT HAD BEEN SEIZED AND THAT SMALL ARMS WERE TAKEN. HE BELIEVED MANY OF THE SIGNAL CORPS TROOPS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS OPERATION HAD BEEN KILLED. NONTHELESS, MANY WEAPONS WERE STILL MISSING.

10. REGARDING THE CENTRAL RADIO STATION IN DACCA, TABARAK SAID A COMBINED GROUP OF AIR FORCE AND SIGNAL CORPS ENLISTED MEN WENT TO THE STATION EARLY SUNDAY MORNING AND TOLD THE LIEUTENANT IN CHARGE THAT THEY WOULD KILL HIM IF HE DID NOT LEAVE. HE LEFT. THEY THEN TOOK OVER THE BUILDING, AND IT WAS FROM HERE THAT THE "LIBERATION" SPEECH WAS BROADCAST JUST BEFORE 6:00 A.M. THE LIEUTENANT WENT NEXT DOOR TO THE INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL AND TELEPHONED FOR HELP. WITHIN SHORT TIME ELEMENTS FROM THE NINTH DIVISION ARRIVED AND RETOOK THE RADIO STATION. SECRET

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PAGE 03 DACCA 05677 02 OF 02 041204Z

THE SERGEANT (UNKNOWN WHETHER ARMY OR AIRFORCE), WHO BROADCAST THE EARLY MORNING MESSAGE, IS NOW IN CUSTODY

BEING INTERROGATED.

11. ON FUTURE PROSPECTS, TABARAK SAID THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVED THE SITUATION WAS UNDER CONTROL, AND THAT THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER SERIOUS DISTURBANCES. NONETHELESS, SMALL ELEMENTS HAD ESCAPED AND WERE ARMED. THERE MAY BE CONTINUED LOW LEVEL DIFFICULTIES IN SOME AREAS. TABARAK DID NOT REPEAT NOT BELIEVE THERE WOULD BE FURTHER TROUBLE IN DACCA. ASKED IF THIS MUTINY WAS DIRECTED AGAINST PRESIDENT ZIA, TABARAK SAID THIS DID NOT SEEM TO BE THE CASE. THE MAIN COMPLAINT OF THE MUTINEERS INVOLVED PAY SCALES AND DISPARITIES IN PRIVILEGES BETWEEN OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN. THEIR RESENTMENT WAS THUS DIRECTED PRIMARLY AGAINST THEIR OWN IMMEDIATE OFFICER CORPS AND NOT AGAINST ZIA. TABARAK SAID THAT NO OFFICER WAS KNOWN TO BE WITH THE TROOPS DURING THE SUNDAY MORNING REVOLT IN DACCA. HE SAID THERE MAY, HOWEVER, BE A SMALL GROUP OF OFFICERS BEHIND THE SCENES AND CIVILIAN JSD ELEMENTS ARE BELIEVED TO BE PROVIDING ADVICE.

MASTERS

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